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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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Jan Bureš and Petr Just

Abstract: *The article analyzes the process of pluralistic party system renewal in Czechoslovakia after the fall of communism in 1989. It shows the initial conditions and major actors, as well as factors that influenced party system structure and behaviour in the environment of a post-communist society without a recent democratic tradition. Special attention is devoted to the differences between Czech and Slovak party systems, as both parts of the former united Czechoslovakia demonstrated differences in their respective party systems both before and after 1989. After the introduction of key political parties, the results of 1990 general parliamentary election and its impact on the party system are analyzed.*

Keywords: ***Czech political parties, Slovak political parties, pluralist party systems, elections***

The Czech and Slovak political party system immediately began to take shape in the first days after the November 1989 revolution, and was concentrated into three fundamental political entities:

1) entities already existing before November 1989, which continued in the new regime (KSČ – Komunistická strana Československa, Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; ČSS – Československá strana socialistická, Czechoslovak Socialist Party; ČSL – Československá strana lidová, Czechoslovak People's Party, KSS – Komunistická strana Slovenska, Communist Party of Slovakia; SSO – Strana slovenskej obrody, Slovak Resurgence Party, and DS – Demokratická strana, Democratic Party)
2) entities that were revived after November 1989, and thus continued in the tradition of their pre-February 1948 or pre-WW2 activities (ČSSD – Československá sociální demokracie, Czechoslovak Social Democracy, and SNS – Slovenská národná strana, Slovak National Party), as well as entities that transformed themselves into political parties from originally dissident groups active during normalisation in Czechoslovakia (KAN – Klub angažovaných nestraníků, Club for Engaged Nonpartisans, ČSDI – Československá demokratická iniciativa, Czechoslovak Democratic Initiative, HOS – Hnutí za občanskou svobodu – Movement for Civic Freedom)
3) Newly established "greenfield" political entities (OF – Občanské fórum, Civic Forum; HSD-SMS – Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii – Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko, Movement for Autonomous Democracy – Party for

Moravia and Silesia; SPR-RSČ – Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa, Union for Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia; HDŽJ – Hnutí důchodců za životní jistoty, Pensioners' Movement for Social Security; SZ – Strana zelených, Green Party; VPN – Verejnosť proti násiliu, Public against Violence; KDH – Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie, Christian-democratic Movement; MNI – Maďarská nezávislá iniciatíva, Hungarian Independent Initiative; MKDH – Maďarské kresťanskodemokratické hnutie, Hungarian Christian-democratic Movement; Spolužitie, the Coexistence movement and so on)

The number of political parties being established increased quickly. While the tumultuous development of political entities attested to citizens' awakening political activity, on the other hand it also made difficult the creation of any kind of stable, functional model of party competition, which only strengthened the dominant position of the OF (Fiala – Herbut 2003: 16). The situation in Slovakia, where an additional player, the KDH, began to threaten the dominant position of the VPN, was slightly different. This party's activities were the continuation of activity by the Christian dissent movement, which was much more active and significant in Slovakia in the 1980s than civic dissent.

The general atmosphere before the elections was marked not only by the efforts of individual political entities to gain exposure among voters, but also by key individual political events, which citizens could more or less follow on live telecasts: in particular the arguments by Federal Assembly MPs over the name of the state and the general raising of the question of constitutional organisation, including the first signs of the potential independence of Slovakia, the demonstrations by Slovak nationalists against V. Havel in Bratislava, disputes among the political elite over vetting (vented in the Federal Assembly and broadcast live to society at large thanks to direct television broadcasts), the fate of the StB (Státní bezpečnost, Secret police) and the federal ministry of the interior, the beginning disputes over economic reform, anti-communist speeches by parts of the new political elite (e.g. Sokol's suggestion in Prague to ban the activities of the KSČM /Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia/), disputes over the property of the Communist Party and the SSM (Socialistický svaz mládeže, Socialist Youth Union) and the opening of sore wounds from the modern history of Czechoslovakia by the media (crimes perpetrated by the communist regime in the 1950s, demands for the rehabilitation of victims and political prisoners and the Soviet occupation in 1968).

The Civic Forum and the Public against Violence parties, Občanské fórum (OF) and Verejnosť proti násiliu (VPN) respectively, both generally considered election favourites, perceived the political contest unambiguously as a plebiscite, choosing

between the old and a new regime, and presented themselves as a nationwide inclusive movement for national reconstruction. The result of this was a marked limitation of space for the function of other political entities, especially left-wing ones (Kunc 2000: 197).

June 1990 elections

Main candidate parties and movements, fundamental characteristics of election programmes

Five political parties and two democratic movements were functioning in Czechoslovakia immediately after November 1989; by the June 1990 elections there was a total of 66 registered political entities, of which 23 were running for the Federal Assembly or (Czech or Slovak) National Councils.

The majority of political entities entering the elections did not display the structure of classic parties as they are known in mature democracies. Generally these were conglomerations of parties and movements with similar orientation regarding the main social issues, and fundamentally targeting all voter groups.

Voters had only a minimal chance to assess the actual abilities of individual leaders and candidates. The Civic Forum gained very wide support, in comparison to other political parties, by virtue of its fundamental strategy - to make the first free elections a civic vote on democracy versus the old regime.

The programmes of the political parties were very similar, and in many basic questions relating to social development were identical. The programme goals of the majority of parties were more or less overlapping, which only made the situation less clear for voters. The highly generalised nature of the programmes of individual parties indicated the immaturity of civic society and party politics. The basic theses of the programmes were concentrated into several simple slogans. These revolved mainly around promises of the development of democracy, a socially and ecologically oriented market economy, the creation of a constitutional state, a vision of economic development, protection of the natural environment and the safeguarding of national security. The concept of Czechoslovakia rejoining Europe and the idea of privatisation of state property were also frequently repeated. References to restitution of property were absent altogether. Social politics was also in a prominent position for all parties, but was generally formulated only very vaguely. The issue of nationhood was a chapter in itself. It was a part of the programme for the majority of Slovak parties and the Moravian HSD-SMS. The Civic Forum ignored it altogether.

Despite this great similarity between political programmes, in public opinion polls during the campaign more than half of the voters claimed that their decision was based most on political parties' programmes (Krejčí 1994: 256) (influenced decision-making in the case of 90% of voters); in second place voters decided based on their trust in the representatives of the parties and movements (one fifth of voters) (Krejčí 1994: 209).

The above-mentioned form of referendum about the past was characterised by sentences from the OF pre-election campaign: "*Those who don't vote for the OF are voting for the communists*", as well as a slogan difficult to understand for a mature pluralist democracy: "*Parties are for partisans, the OF is for everyone*." The first of these directly targeted a specific political entity. It deliberately simplified a political battle between 23 political entities to the main rivals, symbolically representing that discord between the past and the future. This understandably intensified the political conflict, deliberately boxing the voter in and giving them the feeling that they were making a simple decision. This shortcut would later be used regularly in Czech politics (e.g. the ODS /*Občanská demokratická strana*, Civic Democratic Party/ slogan from the 1998 elections: "*To the left or with Klaus"*).

Civic Forum

The Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum,* OF) was led to the elections by Jan Urban, of whom it was generally known that he wanted to leave politics immediately after the elections. The real representatives of the OF however were primarily ministers of the federal and Czech government, or Federal Assembly and Czech National Council MPs, who found themselves on the candidate forms in individual electoral localities.

The OF electoral programme for the first free elections, titled "*Accepting responsibility for our own future"*, was based on a programme thesis which had already been approved by the OF assembly on 31st March, 1990. The programme was introduced by something of an accusation of the communist regime, and was oriented towards the OF's fundamental goals: to reintegrate Czechoslovakia to Europe (which was not understood primarily via the European Community and NATO but rather institutions originating from the Helsinki peace process) and to reform all components of public life. In the economic field, the programme occupied a space that was delineated on one side by support of basic economic reforms (including privatisation, though by the method of selling company shares to its employees) and on the other by the necessity of maintaining social cohesion. While the programme included discussion of the renewal of the principles of private property, passages can also be found ascribing a significant role within the market economy to property ownership by towns, municipalities and co-operative organisations. Overall,

however, the electoral campaign was distinguished by a considerable intangibility, and, in the spirit of the revolutionary slogan "*Parties are for partisans, the OF is for everyone"*, was oriented at all strata of voters that did not want to continue on the path of the old regime. In terms of the main ideological groupings it is possible to find two fundamental focal points: liberal and national (Krejčí 1994: 211)

Social democrats

The development of the relationship between the Civic Forum and social democracy, as an entity that after November 1989 tried to renew left-wing politics on a democratic foundation, was most interesting. The Social Democrats revived their activity immediately after the November revolution in 1989 and attempted to gain recognition as a historical party, which they supported partly by the fact that the ČSSD was the oldest classic Czech political party, and also with the argument that the party had operated uninterrupted, including during the period of management in exile from 1948 to 1989. During the revival of this party there were great conflicts between domestic and exile factions, and further between supporters of close co-operation with the KSČ and supporters of a radical anti-communist line. Before the elections the name of Social Democracy (*Sociální demokracie*) thus covered the Czechoslovak Social-democratic Party (*Čs. sociálně-demokratická strana*), Czechoslovak Social Democracy (*Čs. sociální demokracie*) and the Social-democrat Party (*Sociálně-demokratická strana*) in Slovakia. Rudolf Battěk and his followers in the Czechoslovak Social-democratic Party did not implement their right-wing positions, and so switched to the OF ticket.

The Civic Forum refused to recognise the ČSSD as a historic party, as they were afraid of the swift growth in its popularity as a party that could appeal to an already socially sensitive Czech society with a programme focused on a socially equitable society. In addition to this the leaders of the Civic Forum expressed concerns that many previously discredited communists could switch to social democracy for career reasons, and with the help of this party quickly gain practical political experience. As on several other occasions in its history, the ČSSD this time went through the well worn dance regarding the ownership of its headquarters, *Lidový dům (People's House)*.

The representatives of the KSČ decided to return the social democratic party's traditional headquarters, together with other property confiscated after February 1948, to the party. The leaders of the OF Co-ordination Centre cast doubt upon the historical continuity of Horák's post-revolution ČSSD with the pre-February social democrat party, and positioned themselves against the handing over of *Lidový dům*. It is of course necessary to add that Horák's leadership did not itself act particularly strategically, as it succumbed to social pressure which the leadership of the Civic

Forum managed to evoke, and attempted to present social democracy as a centre-right party.[1] This in the atmosphere of a general disgust at the left, made it impossible for the social democrats to utilise the potential of supporting the ideals of social equity, which were always strongly present in Czech society.

Incidentally, the socialist and civic parties acted similarly in the electoral campaign, vying to verbally reject everything associated with the left-wing foundations of the old regime. While the national socialists, in an attempt to deal with the dominant position of the OF, tried to appeal to the Czech public with a programme of democratic socialism, the means by which they chose to do this (references to the authority of Edvard Beneš and Milada Horáková) proved to be excessively archaic.

The persistent efforts by Horák's Social Democrats, the People's Party and the National Socialists to distance themselves as vocally as possible from the old regime culminated several days before the election in a joint *appeal for the prohibition of the activities of the Communist Party*. The Civic Forum, aware of the legal, political (members of KSČ had until recently represented one tenth of the Czechoslovak population) and technical (it was not clear which institution had the right to adjudicate as to the banning of the activities of a political party) difficulties inherent in the realisation of this step, not only refused this appeal, made by Jan Urban and President Václav Havel, as undemocratic, but also utilised it to weaken the political position of those suggesting it, when it publicly pointed out their pre-revolution loyalty to the communist regime. The politicians of the OF argued that, in addition, in the case of the dissolution of the KSČ, the members of the abolished party would found another, which would thus lead only to a formal renaming, and in addition the members of a thus newly founded party would become victims of the new democratic regime, and could exploit the aura of martyrdom. Because KSČ was not banned, the space of the radical left remained clearly and distinctly legible.

The Communists

The main ideological opponent of the OF was the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ – *Komunistická strana Československa)*. The party consolidated at its convention in Olomouc, 20th–21st December 1989. It released a statement apologising to citizens for all injustices committed, accepting the abolition of its own armed units and accepted a new action programme, something of directive for the further activity of the party. It respected the principles of pluralist democracy, and also recognised private ownership. The party effected a partial federalisation of its structures before the election when on 31st March 1990 it established the

[1] Jiří Kunc even believes that the ČSSD during 1989–1992 severely damaged itself by the acceptance of the political ideal of a large coalition, which they supported with the example of governments in pan-national coalitions in the first Czechoslovak Republic – cf.: Kunc 2000: 216.

Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM – *Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy*) and the Communist party of Slovakia (KSS – *Komunistická strana Slovenska*). This act led to further progressive division of the party. In its electoral programme, the KSČ focused particularly on social issues, and presented itself as a barrier against unemployment and other maladies of capitalism. The Communist Party entered the elections as a unified political entity, with a new cherry logo, and with a new building in *Politických vězňů* (Political Prisoners – *sic!*) *Street.*

Moravian movement

In the period when constitutional disputes between Czechs and Slovaks began to take shape, the Moravian movement, emphasising the historical rights of Moravia and Silesia, utilised the resultant atmosphere. The Movement for Autonomous Democracy – Party for Moravia and Silesia (HSD-SMS – *Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii – Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko*) was established at a meeting of the Party for Moravia and Silesia in Kroměříž on 1st April 1990. This entity proclaimed itself to be a movement promoting the interests of the given region and uniting citizens on this regional principal.

In the so-called Moravia-Silesia Declaration (*Moravskoslezská deklarace*), the HSD-SMS called for the creation of a federal state of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, and Slovakia, and unequivocally rejected the bi-federal organisation of Czechoslovakia. Before the elections it even presented a proposal to the public on this matter, suggesting that the first free elections be held only for the Federal Assembly and that, instead of an election to the Czech National Council, elections to a Czech parliament and a Moravian-Silesian parliament should be held later, alongside municipal elections. HSD-SMS also called for, among other things, the establishment of an autonomous federal nation of Moravia-Silesia, within the framework of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, with a provisional delegation (until the election of a Moravian-Silesian parliament) of legislative authority at the Czech National Council (Springerová 2005: 43). This movement capitalised primarily on the newly awakened ideas of Moravian regionalism.

The high election results of HSD-SMS were, paradoxically, helped by an appeal by representatives of the OF (P. Pithart, V. Klaus), running for election in Moravia, to voters to not vote for small political parties (Springerová 2005: 43). HSD-SMS candidates responded to this with an appeal for voters in Moravia and Silesia to cast at least one vote in three (to the Chamber of the People of the Federal Assembly, Chamber of Nations of the Federal Assembly, and the Czech National Council) "for Moravia". As a result of this targeted campaign, voters' preference for HSD-SMS quickly grew, (from 3% on 15th May to 6% on 30th May) (Rak 1992: 209).

People's party

The Czechoslovak People's Party (*ČSL – Československá strana lidová*) joined with the Christian-democrat Party (KDS– *Křesťanskodemokratická strana*) before the elections, creating the Christian and Democratic Union (KDU – *Křesťanská a demokratická unie*). This coalition was the strongest centrist party, promoted the ideals of national understanding and built on the principles of solidarity and equality. The union of these two parties was, of course, not without problem, because the KDS, represented mainly by Václav Benda, was grounded firmly on anticommunist ideals, while ČSL was still only with difficulty coming to terms with its collaborational past from the times of the communist-dominated Národní Fronta (National Front) (Měchýř 1999: 183).

Pre-election voter preference

In the newly nascent democratic society, public opinion polls became a welcome novelty for citizens, to whom they had been denied before November 1989. Despite the fact that the methods of the first poll agencies were still in their infancy, even these polls indicate much of interest about shifts in opinion within Czech society, and are really the only "hard" data from a period of general disorientation of socio-economic interests and the political orientation of citizens.[2]

In the first survey of 7th March 1990, the Civic Forum was preferred by 25% of voters. KSČ was in second place with 13%. Other parties, with minor differences, were under the 10% threshold. In Slovakia the VPN led with 18%, just in front of the KDH (17%) and the Greens (16%). The KSS and DS also had over 10%.

A significant turning point came in April. In the Czech part of the republic and in Slovakia both main democratic groups – OF and VPN – lost approximately 4% of their supporters. Both Christian entities, KDU and KDH, grew in popularity. The Christian and democratic union (KDU) became the second most popular entity with the support of 15% of voters, and the KDH became the strongest party in Slovakia with 26%. A competition between these two groups was drawing near. The situation in the Czech part of the republic then changed again. While voter preference for OF grew, support for the KDU was unstable and decreasing. The apparent threat to the OF from the KDU at the beginning of the elections resulted in the attack by Jan Ruml on Josef Bartončík; he blamed him for co-operation with the Communist State Police. KSČ maintained the same voter support throughout. A mistrust of public opinion polls predominated among its voters. In the end, in comparison to the final opinion poll, the KSČ gained a higher percentage of votes than predicated

[2] All results from public opinion pools are from Krejčí 1994: 240–242.

by the final opinion poll. The HSD-SMS strengthened significantly in the last days of the campaign.

The greatest slump was experienced by the Green Party. In April it still had 13% of the vote in the Czech part of the republic. In the end it did not win seats in any representative body. It did not manage to clearly distinguish itself from the OF and in the sphere which was the party's specialty – ecology – did not manage to outline a concrete programme.

According to surveys only 30% of the population stated that anyone had tried to personally influence their vote, which indicates quite impersonally managed electioneering. The candidates of the OF tried most to run a campaign of personal contact, personally contacting 13% of people questioned, KSČ candidates managed to contact 10%, KDU 7%, Green party 5% and ČSS 2%.

The pre-election campaign took place primarily in the media, and in particular on television. Political entities did not have any experience in managing campaigns and did not know how to target a concrete voter group. A specific role was certainly also played by inadequate technical support. According to voting regulations the length of the official electoral campaign was set at 40 days, and ended 48 hours before the election.

Inexperience with managing electoral campaigns can also be observed in the statistics indicating the growing dissatisfaction of citizens with the development of the campaigns.[a] At the start of May 1990, 25% of those questioned expressed dissatisfaction, immediately after the elections this had risen to 45%, of whom 14% expressed outright disgust.

The most misapprehension was directed at the OF and VPN campaigns. The number of reservations increased in proportion to education. After the election, 26% of those questioned believed that the type of campaign had played a decisive role in electoral preference, 36% thought that it likely had some effect, 26% thought that it probably had no effect and 12% thought that it definitely had no effect.

Also interesting is data about when citizens made their political choice. At the end of April 1990, 51% of those questioned had decided who they would vote for, a further 24% had decided in May, at the start of June another 19% and a final 6% immediately before the elections. Hence shortly before the end of the electoral campaign a battle was being waged for a quarter of the votes. Of these, 40% decided according to "the lesser evil".

Election results

The first free elections in Czechoslovakia after 44 years took place on Friday 8th and Saturday 9th June, 1990. Even the first data from the election can be considered

a triumph of the new regime: voter turnout in the Czech part of the republic reached 96.8% and in Slovakia 95.4%, which in both cases is almost double the participation for similar elections in mature democracies. In both republics, parties symbolising political change triumphed.

The elections represented a triumphal victory for the Civic Forum. A total of 127 OF candidates fought their way into the Czech National Council (49.5% of votes), 50 candidates to the Chamber of Nations of the Federal Assembly (49.96% votes) and 68 OF candidates were elected to Chamber of the People of the Federal Assembly (53.15% of votes). This significant victory was explained by sociologist Jan Herzmann in terms of several factors:

1) Many voters from both republics were influenced by the popularity of President Vaclav Havel, who while not being involved in the campaign officially was, by virtue of his actions, de facto a supporter of the OF and VPN.
2) The so-called "band-wagon effect" manifested itself in voter decisions: a tendency of the undecided part of the population to support the party that would likely win (favoured party).
3) The negative character of the campaign drew more citizens into the political battle and compelled them to take part in the elections,
4) The appeal by leaders of the OF to "*not vote for small parties"* had a noticeable effect on many voters (Herzmann 1992: 165–183; see also Šimíček 1995: 149).

Table 1: Results of elections to the Federal Assembly, 8–9 June, 1990 (only entities that won seats)

Czech Republic							
Party, movement, coalition	**Chamber of the People (lower house)**			**Chamber of Nations (upper house)**			
	Votes won		**Seats**	**Votes won**		**Seats**	**FA MPs**
	votes	**%**		**votes**	**%**		
OF	3,851,172	53.15	**68**	3,613,513	49.96	**50**	**118**
KSČ	979,996	13.48	**15**	997,919	13.80	**12**	**27**
KDU	629,359	8.69	**9**	633,053	8.75	**6**	**15**
HSD-SMS	572,015	7.89	**9**	658,477	9.10	**7**	**16**

Source: cf. Krejčí 2006: 269

Table 2: Results of elections to the Czech National Council, 8–9 June, 1990 (only entities that won seats)

Party, movement, coalition	Votes won		Seats
	votes	%	
OF	3,56, 201	49.50	**127**
KSČ	954,690	13.24	**32**
HSD-SMS	723,609	10.03	**22**
KDU	607,134	8.42	**19**

Source: cf. Krejčí 2006: 270

The five-percent threshold meant that to win its first seat a party required 362,000 votes in the Czech part of the republic and 169,000 votes in Slovakia. A whole series of voters was thus without representation. In numbers this was 1,356,413 voters in the Czech National Council, 1,215,908 in the Chamber of the People and 1,328,557 voters in the Chamber of Nations (Krejčí 1994: 191). Voters utilised the opportunity to vote for various parties in each of the representative bodies.

In post-election surveys 70% of respondents stated that they had voted for one party, 21% for two, and 9% stated that they had voted for three parties (each of the Chambers and the Czech National Council were elected separately).

It is interesting to observe the geographical support base of some specific parties. Traditional Czechoslovak parties in particular were closely comparable to previous elections in the 1st and 3rd republics. The Social Democrats had the highest voter support in the 1990 election in the Prague area and particularly in northern and eastern Bohemia. The social democrats future stronghold – northern Moravia – did not have significant interest in the party at these elections.

The KSČ was, traditionally, most popular in northern Bohemia, partially in eastern Bohemia, in the areas of central Moravia and in Silesia.

The KDU (and ČSL) confirmed its strongest positions in southern Moravia and newly also in eastern Bohemia.

With newly established parties it is not possible to speak of traditional and non-traditional areas. The Civic Forum appealed most to residents of Prague, where it won 62.47% of votes in the elections to the Federal Assembly House of the People. In western Bohemia it also managed to win more than 60% of votes (61.67% to the Federal Assembly Chamber of the People).

The HSD-SMS won the most votes (25.2% of votes for the Federal Assembly Chamber of the People) in southern Moravia, and was also successful in northern Moravia (15.2% Federal Assembly Chamber of the People) (Krejčí 1994: 213–216; cf. also: Cigánek 1992: 85–86).

The elections in June 1990 signified a clear slump in left-wing power. The Communist Party maintained their position as the strongest left-wing formation, however its election results (13.5% of votes) did not allow it to significantly influence political events. The social democrats won 4.11% of votes to the Czech National Council, and the Czechoslovak Socialist Party finished even worse with 2.68% of votes. There was an understandable contempt for left-wing politics, stemming from efforts to deny the undemocratic nature of the old regime. Paradoxically, the only left-wing candidates who won seats in Parliament were those social democrats that ran on the OF ticket – these new MPs with Rudolf Battěk at the helm were however expelled from ČSSD after the elections.

Basic evaluation of the 1990 elections

With the dominant victory by the OF in the Czech part of the republic, the first democratic elections clearly demonstrated the will of citizens to reject the undemocratic foundation of the pre-November regime. Its original leaders, the KSČM, were allowed to further function as a legitimate part of the political spectrum. These elections can thus be labelled as "retrospective", since the majority of voters cast their vote on the basis of their relationship with the past (Krejčí 1994: 298). The success of the People's Party confirmed the definite relevance of Christian-democratic elements in Czech politics. A complete surprise in these elections was the success of the pro-Moravia movement. The election results demonstrated that voters were inclined towards more substantial support of nationally oriented parties and smaller parties primarily in elections to National Councils, perhaps because they ascribed less importance to them. The elections did by no means decide, and could not decide, the specific paths social, political and economic changes would take in the future.

The first free and democratic elections in June 1990 were also accompanied by the absolute instability of the party system. Political parties were essentially only just being formed and were finding their own topics and voters. They did not have their own stable social foundations. Many so-called historical parties (e.g. ČSSD) only barely revived their tradition, while others (socialists) did not manage to do this at all. Apart from newly originating entities, however, the political scene was dominated by two entities, embodying the periods before and immediately after the November revolution: the Communist Party and the Civic Forum, a conglomerate of various pro-democracy oriented political entities.

After November 1989, the Czech party system did not develop without the influence of previous party systems. Its emerging likeness was influenced both by elements of the party-political system of the first Czechoslovak Republic and developments during the period of the undemocratic regime (Kunc 2000: 166). The greatest

influence on the likeness of the new party system were of course the historical circumstances of the time, i.e. events, the nature of the political environment and systemic changes taking place in Czech society immediately after November 1989. As Petr Fiala and Maxmilián Strmiska have drawn attention to, transformation of a political party is always a complex process, which takes place on two levels. On the one hand the likeness of political parties in a system is significantly determined by regulation *from above* – so-called parameters of the first order, which create the framework and conditions for the activities of political parties. On the other hand, however, a substantial part of the structuring of the internal organisation of political parties is driven *from below* by the members of these parties. Precisely for this reason, some elements of continuity with pre-November development can be preserved in the case of political parties (in contrast to other political – e.g. constitutional – institutions). In addition, the party system is constantly developing, and this flux does not diminish – even in stabilised democratic systems the development of party systems can be very tumultuous (e.g. Italy and France). The most important factors for the development of the party system are precisely those social phenomena that have the most difficulty maintaining their permanence, and which have a tendency towards constant movement – the social stratification of a society, the social-moral environment, relevant cleavages and so on (Fiala – Strmiska 2001).

The determining factor in the creation of a party spectrum in the immediate post-communist period was the absence of classic (Rokkan) historical cleavages in the disoriented Czech society. These cleavages only grew in significance very slowly and gradually, as the first results of the social and economic reforms expressed themselves in the first years of transformation. This understandably affected the likeness of Czech political parties and movements in the first phase of transformation, at least in that these entities were only just gradually forming their ideological foundations and finding firmer grounding among individual groups of voters.

While in this period there is an opening of space for the foundation and function of political parties, nevertheless some basic systematic insufficiencies, which have their origins in the deep political change which the entire society underwent, express themselves here. Tens of political parties and other entities were established before the elections in June 1990; however these parties did not have a firm anchoring in the electoral structure and did not manage to assert themselves as generally accepted instruments of the political competition. The first period of the creation of the Czech party system is thus characterised by a constant precipitancy (creation and regrouping of political entities took place almost continuously right until the first free elections), ambiguity of the positions of individual players (not just party entities) within the system and a lack of grounded models of behaviour among players of the political game. As S. Mainwaring points out, it is precisely

institutionalisation and the anchoring of the party system that are the key factors for nascent developing democracies (Mainwaring 1998: 71). Miroslav Novák, for example, for this reason infers that a critical analysis, on the basis of established methods, of the party system can in the Czech case only be seriously used only for development after the parliamentary elections in 1992 (Novák – Lebeda et al. 2004: 254).

Political power in the first period, that is until the elections in June 1990, was to a significant extent distributed by other means, particularly on the basis of personal relationships between members of the new political elite, and political parties were not yet perceived as representatives and mediators of the interests of individual social groups, as even the social stratification of Czech society was undergoing a tumultuous process of transformation.

The rapid and spontaneous process of the creation of the first political entities which, thanks to its striking dynamics, made a speedy stabilisation of models of functioning of the competition between Czech political parties impossible also corresponded to this. This in fact allowed the Civic Forum to maintain itself in the position of dominant player in political events at least until the 1990 elections. The public perceived political parties with a certain contempt, as a consequence of the many years of the assertion of the power monopoly of the KSČ. The new political elite, represented in this phase chiefly by dissidents from the OF, also had a reserved approach to political partisanship, and preferred the utilisation of mutual bonds and communicational means used during the period of dissent. The new elite also expressed an equally ambivalent relationship to the classic mechanisms of representation and mediation of political interests in general.[3] Political scientist Pavel Pšeja projects this (formerly dissident) defence of the idea of non-partisanship, even in the sense of the preference of the principle of civic society to classic structures of political parties, not only into political discussions, but also into political science approaches to the study of political parties, and demonstrates how this phenomenon co-created the positions of several of the leading Czech political scientists, such as Jiří Kunc and Michal Klíma (Pšeja 2005: 12). In this first period, even giving precedence to the above-mentioned elements of "revolutionary direct democracy" did not benefit political parties.

[3] Václav Havel, for example, moderated his originally negative view of political partys somewhat with the passage of time, as can be seen, for example in an interview with Respekt magazine, where he defended political parties as the political space in which ideas and political leaders are born – cf.: Respekt 1998 (15): 10.

Cleavages in the first phase of the creation of the Czech party system (up to the 1990 elections)

Defining the main Rokkan cleavages (Lipset – Rokkan eds. 1967) for the initial period of transition of Czech society to democracy is very complex, as it is necessary to realise that the whole of Czech society was undergoing a period of fundamental political change, which above all represented the blurring of interests and position of individual social strata. Some political scientists, such as Ladislav Mrklas, point specifically to the significant destruction of the social structure of Czech society during the communist regime, which made it almost impossible to apply Cleavage theory to the analysis of the first transition period (Mrklas 2003: 249). On the other hand, other authors such as Miroslav Novák do not entirely agree that the impact of the communist regime upon the social structure of the Czech society was so destructive that the cleavages, similar to Western society, could not be quickly restored (Novák 1999: 135–136). Novák thus actually builds partly on the theory of Raymond Aron (Aron 1993) arguing that the communist regime was a form of industrial society, in which – similarly to the world of democracy and market economy - similar social processes exist (urbanisation, secularisation, and consumerism); with the exception that in communist regimes the real social interests of citizens were suppressed. Nevertheless, the real existence of diverse social interests, and therefore also the social stratification of society in Communist regimes, provides M. Novák arguments for the conclusion that in Czechoslovakia after November 1989, for example, there were suitable conditions for the classical cleavages of Western European societies to resume relatively quickly (Novák – Lebeda et al. 2004: 258).

The possibility of applying cleavage theory to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the first period of post-communist transition was quite categorically refuted by M. G. Roskin, according to whom the process of transition to democracy in the region took place so quickly that during it there was no time for deep ties between political parties and voter groups to be created (Roskin 1994).

Despite the difficulties mentioned above, however, let us try to ascertain whether during the first period of the structuring of the Czech party system after 1989 we can find at least some indications of traditional cleavages. The fundamental and first cleavage, which accompanied the post-November transformation of Czech society, can perhaps be identified as the cleavage of *KSČ – its opposition*, or the cleavage of the *old regime – new regime*. In the first phase (up to the elections in June 1990), however, it is not possible to observe any other significant issues beyond this basic division that could polarize society in the period of the nascent party system (Fiala – Herbut 2003: 16). The striking electoral success of the OF in fact also led to the ending of the relevance of this division.

The results of the June elections also indicated the definite, albeit significantly weaker, relevance of cleavages in the sense of their fundamental definition by Stein Rokkan:

1) The cleavage of *church – state*, which expressed itself in the relative success of the Christian-democratic formation KDU.
2) The cleavage of *centre – periphery*, which found its expression in the surprising success of the pro-Moravian HSD-SMS. Perhaps the main reason for the massive voter support of this entity was, in the framework of a democratising society, the open-ended question of the strengthening of the role of the Moravia-Silesia region in the framework of constitutional organisation. This cleavage also expressed itself in the constitutional disputes among representatives of the Czech and Slovak political elite in 1990–1992.
3) The cleavage of *urban – rural*, which expressed itself in different voter positions between urban and rural populations (e.g. the relative success of the Communist Party in rural areas).

Jiří Kunc also noted that while the influence of classic historical cleavages was only marginal during the first period of post-communist transformation of Czech society, in the subsequent period the classic characteristics of these social cleavages developed significantly (Kunc 2000: 167). After the achievement of the basic objectives of a broad democratic movement (i.e. removing the old regime) there is a differentiation of this broad movement, particularly on the basis of the restoration of socio-economic cleavages. These, in the form of cleavages founded on the relationship of citizens to the radically changing structure of property ownership within the society (which can be interpreted as the embodiment of the classic division into right and left[4]) had in 1990 not yet expressed itself markedly, though in later years (especially in 1991–1992 and later up to 1996) clearly became the most important cleavage in Czech society.

The low level of relevance of this cleavage in the first year of transformation related to the fact that in Czech society, undergoing a radically discontinuous development after November 1989, no firmly anchored positions existed that were measurable in terms of opinion polls, nor any clearly interest-based social strata within society. In the following years (from 1992 onwards) it is possible to observe a further *strengthening of socio-economic cleavages*, expressed by the growing significance of the class dimension of electoral voting. This cleavage is reflected in

[4] Herbert Kitschelt however offers another comparison when pointing out that the cleavage of transformation is comparable to the cleavage of pro-market liberals – anti-market authoritarians – cf.: Kitschelt 1992: 7–51. Brno political scientist Pavel Pšeja discusses in this regard the cleavage of social – liberal cf.: Pšeja 2005: 18.

the sharp division of Czech society into supporters of the left and right, and in the first years of the existence of an independent Czech Republic was a positive sign that events were gradually leading to the projection of the interests and values of voters – members of individual social strata – upon their voting preferences. This development confirms István Szelényi's conclusion that in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe the concepts of left and right are assuming their full meaning depending on the institutionalisation of party systems, which reflects the victory of "*politics of interests"* over *"politics of symbols"* (Szelényi – Szelényi – Poster 1996: 466–477). This then results in the strengthening of the relationship between social class and choice of political parties

In the Czech Republic, this process gradually led to the strengthening of the camp of left-wing voters in particular (and was involved in the gradual growth of support for ČSSD from 1993), especially since this camp was in the immediately post-revolution period politically fragmented and considerably weakened (Mrklas 2003: 249). Sociological surveys in 1990 found high levels of discordance between voting preference and the value orientation of voters (Novák – Lebeda et al. 2004: 261). This was due primarily to a very one-sided bias of Czech society towards the right (opposition to the left, associated with the old regime, pro-market euphoria, rediscovering the values of Euro-Atlantic civilisation, etc.), which only started to balance during the subsequent several years.

The following common features apply to Czech society in the post-communist period, as they do to all other transitional societies of Central and Eastern Europe:

A) In the first phases of transformation the individual national societies are not strongly socially stratified;

B) Individual groups of people (social classes) are inconsistent in opinion, fluid in their interests and unstable in their political preferences;

C) More significantly formed cleavages are not a reflection of the natural social stratification of society but rather of an artificial ideological and political conflict provoked by political parties within the ongoing electoral competition, and only later artificially introduced among voters (Hloušek 2000: 373–395).

The basic characteristics of the first political movements also corresponded to the basic signs that accompanied social transformation in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989:

1) Transitions from communism to democracy were initially carried out by very broad and unstructured social movements, which always appealed to the non-communist majority;

2) Supporters of these movements were people from all professions and lifestyles, with a number of different political views and opinions. This meant that these movements did not speak on behalf of specific groups within society, but rather in the name of "*everyone*";
3) These *"social movements"* were coalitions of a large number of small groups, be they potential political parties or small interest groups. The OF included 14 different entities, including the Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, neo-liberals, reform communists, former dissidents and ecologists. The Bulgarian Union of Democratic Forces (SDS) was composed of 17 separate groups, which included both political parties and interest groups (including the revived social democracy), Ekoglasnosť environmental groups and the Green Party. The Slovenian Democratic Union (DEMOS) was composed of 7 different parties, including the Christian Democrats, Liberals, Agrarians and Greens. Poland's Solidarity was composed of blue-collar and agricultural groups, trade unionists, intellectuals, the Christian Democrats and other political streams. Other organized movements such as the Hungarian Democratic Forum, Slovakia's Public against Violence and the Romanian National Salvation Front were organised similarly.

1) With the possible exception of Solidarity, these new movements did not focus their activities upon acquiring and retaining power, but rather on obtaining adequate representation which would be able to face the communists;
2) In reality these new movements can be understood more as organised collective campaigns against the previous regime. This is because they united citizens *against* the former communist regime rather than *for* a certain model of society.

Compared with classic political parties these social movements had the following characteristics:

a) Very vague, unspecified ideologies (the programmes of these movements in 1989 encompassed, in particular, the requirement for the restoration of pluralist democracy and the market economy. The programmes also had a very strong moralistic nature;
b) Broad electoral support and an extensive spectrum of viewpoints on the solution to basic social problems;
c) Universal appeal in an effort to prevent attempt to create religious and political divisions (e.g. left-right spectrum);
d) Vague organisational structure;
e) More characteristics of pressure groups rather than political parties;

f) The tendency to mobilise the public on the basis of a simple topic (in the case of the first "*founding*" elections this was an effort to prevent the Communists retaining power);
g) Their objective was simply representation, not power;
h) Newly elected Members of these movements lacked interest in the organisational aspects of the party, and in Parliament had very weak party discipline;
i) These political groups specifically abstained from using the word "party" to escape from the context (connotation) of the past, and called themselves a "front", "forum", "Union", "Movement", "Association", etc.;
j) Often designated themselves as a *"social movement"*

These specific characteristics of the democratising movements emerging in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 later also influenced the likeness of the newly forming party systems in these countries. These were from the start of their inception accompanied by certain specific features, such as the lack of mass parties, the prevalence of cadre parties, the personalisation of politics, an effort by the largest political parties to present themselves as "catch-all parties" and appealing to all voter groups in an effort to rid them of a general and common enemy. For this reason such parties are very similar to cadre parties, based strongly on ideology or membership of the social-political elite.

As demonstrated by sociological analyses of political orientation and electoral preference of Czech society after 1989, these results concretely manifest themselves in the Czech political system in that Czech politics is dominated by two main axes: the left-right axis, which is supplemented by the authoritarianism-liberalism axis (Večerník – Matějů 1998: 218). Unlike the mature societies of Western Europe however, in Czech society the level of significance of left-right perception of politics is much higher, and the role of the second axis is substantially weaker.

This is also reflected in the political self-identification of members of social groups in Czech society. While individuals who rank themselves at the top of the social hierarchy are more likely to vote for the right and have strongly liberal attitudes, members of social groups of lower standing are more likely to sympathise with the left and have a greater tendency to authoritarian attitudes. Members of the slowly emerging middle class are then generally classed as moderate right voters with a slight inclination towards liberalism (Večerník – Matějů 1998: 219).

The results of opinion polls relating to the attitudes of the Czech middle class become interesting when we include such status symbols as education or profession in the values observed. While members of the so-called *old middle class* (people characterised solely by having completed tertiary education, under the old regime)

exhibit more of an inclination to support the moderate liberal right, members of the so-called *new middle class* (created after November 1989 and characterised mainly by their profession as traders or entrepreneurs) often show an inclination for more radical political attitudes.

Also interesting in the observation of electoral behaviour of Czech voters is the fact that according to the above-mentioned sociological analysis, membership of the middle class is considered a more substantial factor than level of education attained (Večerník – Matějů 1998: 222). For these members of the middle class, whose subjective self-identification with this class corresponds also to their objective classification, a more substantial clarity of political attitudes can be observed. These typical representatives of the middle class have deeper-rooted anti-egalitarian attitudes, more clearly defined attitudes against the ideas of socialism and strong support of the principles of fair play in society, including an emphasis on the principle of equal opportunity (Večerník – Matějů 1998: 223).

If we try to summarise the characteristics of the first democratic elections in Czechoslovakia since 1946, it is possible to observe that the elections took place according to clearly defined democratic rules and allowed voters a real pluralistic choice of candidate entities, by which they fulfilled their main and most important role – the foundation of a new democratic regime and the provision of democratic legitimacy to the elected representatives of the public.

Public against Violence

The Public against Violence (VPN – *Verejnosť proti násiliu*) was established as a broad movement on 20th November 1989 and entered the election in the position of a party that had participated in the discussions about the transition to democracy in November and December 1989, and subsequently in the composition of a "government of national understanding". In the party system it did not have as dominant a position as the Civic Forum had in the Czech part of the republic. This was also evident in the election result. Although the VPN won, their victory was not as clear-cut as the OF's victory in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia. The KDH represented significant competition, and managed to attract part of the opposition-minded vote because of its connections to Christian dissent from the period of normalisation, and also utilised the high level of religiosity of Slovak society (Kopeček 2007: 304–305).

The VPN's position in the party system was also complicated by an illegible ideological orientation, a problem that was faced by all similar entities in post-communist Europe. As in the case of the OF in the Czech Republic, *Solidarity* in Poland and the *Sajudis* movement in Lithuania, the Slovak VPN movement was ideologically very pluralistic and embodied diverse currents of opinion, whose link was an opposition to the communists. According to Vladimír Leška, the VPN was

"*organisationally and ideologically ambivalent and amorphous*" (Leška 2006: 24), while Ladislav Cabada, again in relation to the VPN, speaks of a "*conglomerate uniting a wide range of personalities*" (Cabada 2000: 85) Slovak political scientists Ján Liďák, Viera Koganová and Dušan Leška identified six key groups within the VPN (Liďák – Koganová – Leška 1999: 23):

1. Reform communists from the period of the Prague Spring, who were later persecuted during normalisation and who joined together to form the Resurgence club (e.g. Alexander Dubček, Hvězdon Kočtúch and Augustín Marián Húska);
2. Christian dissenters (e.g. brothers Jan and Ivan Čarnogurský and Jozef and František Mikloško);[5]
3. Representatives of the Green and Environmental movements (e.g. Ján Budaj and Peter Tatár);
4. Civil dissenters, so-called "islands of positive deviation" (e.g. Jozef Kučerák, Ivan Mikloš, Vladimír Ondruš and Peter Zajac);[6]
5. Pragmatics and 'uncompromised' communists (e.g. Milan Čič and Marián Čalfa);[7]
6. Artists (e.g. Milan Kňažko and Ladislav Chudík) (Liďák – Koganová – Leška 1999: 23)

The above characteristics of the VPN correspond to the definition of an entity that was not a classic political party. The terms "*parties of the movement type*" (Ágh 1998: 203) "*parties of the forum type*" (lster – Offe – Preuss 1998: 132) and "*umbrella organisations*" (Gill 2002: 37) became common for labelling these entities, emerging in essentially all of post-communist Europe. These were characterised by a loose organisational structure, lower level of hierarchism, broader ideological boundaries and a related lower level of discipline among the member base. In the VPN the main link of the individual streams of thought was the notion of the rejection of communism, which held the entire entity relatively together at this time, however the first cracks began to appear shortly after the election.

5 Representatives of the Christian wing of the VPN sooner or later ended up in the ranks of the KDH.

6 The representatives of civic dissent on the other hand generally ended up in the DS, later the OKS.

7 Membership of the VPN and candidacy for the movement in the 1990 election was also offered to the post-revolution chairman of the Slovak National Council (KSS). He, however, refused it with the words that he "*would only be an instrument for the gaining of votes for VPN*". Schuster himself claims that while he would probably have been elected to parliament, "*that is where my political career would have ended; the post-election parliament and governmental positions had already been allocated beforehand, and not to former members of the KSČ,without regard to their expertise and experience or moral profile and attitudes in the past"* See: Leško 2000: 28; Schuster 1997: 332.

Christian-democratic movement

The Christian-democratic Movement (KDH – *Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie*), originating in February 1990, continued the tradition of Christian dissent from the period of normalisation (Kopeček 2007: 304–305). Christian dissent was, generally, much more active and significant in Slovakia than civil dissent, which generally also reflects the influence of the church upon political and social events in Slovakia, in comparison with the Czech part of the then common state. Christian democrats also drew upon the "*massive post-revolution authority of the Catholic Church and from the initial popularity of its leader* (Ján Čarnogurský, author's comment)" (Kopeček 2000; Kopeček 2007: 304–305). Despite the fact that within the conflict over the likeness of the political regime the VPN and KDH stood on the same side of the fence, in the second conflict of church – state they de facto stood on opposite sides of the conflict (Rybář 2003: 278–279). Although the church – state cleavage played a certain role, it was not dominant enough during the period to prevent the emergence of a coalition alliance between the VPN and KDH.

Democratic Party

After November 1989, the Democratic Party (DS – *Demokratická* strana) followed in the tradition of its predecessor of 1944–1948. From 1948 to 1989 it existed under the name of the Slovak Resurgence Party (SSO – *Strana slovenskej obrody*). In December 1989 it returned to the DS name and began distancing itself from its National-front past. This change was completed in January 1990, when pre-February party functionary Martin Kvetko, returning from exile, became leader of the party. The party ran alone in the first free elections.

Hungarian political parties

The renewal of a pluralist party system was also reflected in the political re-activation of ethnic minorities. Considering the presence of a sizeable Hungarian minority in Slovakia, it was not surprising that this particularly involved parties representing this community. Immediately after November 1989, several entities representing ethnic minorities emerged. Immediately, on the 18th November 1989, the Hungarian Independent Initiative (MNI – *Maďarská nezávislá iniciatíva*), a liberally oriented movement of mainly Hungarian intellectuals, was established. In the first elections the MNI went into the elections in a pre-election coalition with the VPN, thanks to which it gained a share of power after the elections. In 1992, the MNI transformed into the Hungarian Civic Party (MOS – *Maďarská občianska strana*).

The Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (MKDH – *Maďarské kresťanskodemokratické hnutie*), formed on 17th March 1990, capitalised on the

religious character of Slovak society. It co-operated with the Coexistence movement (EGY – *Együttélés-Spolužitie-Wspólnota-Soužití*), which was founded by former dissident Miklós Duray on 1st March 1990, and which originally intended to represent various ethnic minorities living in Slovakia. Considering the marginal representation of other ethnic minorities, however, it in reality functioned as a Hungarian entity, in addition to which its rhetoric was highly radical, and together with its representatives it is most commonly associated with allegations of activities leading to the secession of territories in southern Slovakia and their integration into Hungary. MKDH and EGY went to the elections in coalition in 1990, were successful, but remained in opposition.

Hungarian parties did not primarily focus on defining their position on the left-right scale; the key identifier of their activities and programme was the representation of minority interests. This party can be classified in terms of the Centre – Periphery cleavage line. It is interesting that the Hungarian parties did not support the emancipatory tendencies of Slovakia and preferred the preservation of the Czechoslovak state.

Slovak National Party

The Slovak National Party (SNS – *Slovenská národná strana*), like the DS, built on the history of its predecessor. In the case of SNS this was an entity that existed from 1871 to 1938 (after this it was merged with the HSĽS (Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, *Hlinkova Slovenská Ľudová strana*), and after the war its restoration was not authorised). The revival of the party hence did not take place until 7th March 1990. The profile of the party reflected, to a certain extent, the activation of ethnic minority parties and also the effort to underpin the "*growing demand for a solution to the national agenda*" (Kopeček 2007: 418) in relation to the standing of Slovakia within Czechoslovakia. In time the SNS became the main supporter of the division of the united state.

Communist Party of Slovakia

The Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS – *Komunistická strana Slovenska*) entered the first elections to the Slovak National Council as a part of the KSČ, the former state-wide party which was, as a result of the November events, removed from monopoly power. In the period from 1989 to 1990 it and the VPN together participated in the Slovak government of national understanding. Though it was still a part of the state-wide KSČ (in fact its territorial organization), it was evident that its internal processes and changes were directed elsewhere than the official national politics of the Communists. In February 1990 a group with Peter Weiss and Milan Ftáčník at its centre took over the leadership of KSS and began a social-democratic transformation. While they finished the elections in 4th place, the share of votes won was similar to Communists in the Czech part of the republic.

Elections in 1990

Elections, called by a resolution of the presidium of the Slovak National Council[8] for 8–9 June 1990, were intended to be a significant milestone in the process of democratising society that had been started in November 1989. In these first "post-November" elections on Slovak territory a total of 16 entities stood for election and seven won seats in the Slovak National Council. A total of 95.4% of Slovaks exercised their right to vote in June 1990 (Novotný 2000). Thanks to the low threshold for entry of a party into parliament, only 7.6% of votes in the election were ineffectual. Taking into account the high voter turnout, low number of ineffectual votes and the use of Hare quotas, it can be concluded that the result of the election was likely the most faithful to date, and reflected the political preferences of the Slovak population.

Table 3: Results of elections to the Federal Assembly, 8–9 June, 1990 (only entities that won seats)

Slovak Republic							
Party, movement, coalition	Chamber of the People (lower house)			Chamber of Nations (upper house)			
	Votes won		Seats	Votes won		Seats	FA MPs
	votes	%		votes	%		
VPN	1 104 125	32.54	**19**	1 262 278	37.28	**33**	**52**
KDH	644 008	18.98	**11**	564 172	16.66	**14**	**25**
KSČ	468 411	13.81	**8**	454 740	13.43	**12**	**20**
SNS	372 025	10.96	**6**	387 387	11.44	**9**	**15**
MKDH-EGY	291 287	8.58	**5**	287 426	8.49	**7**	**12**

Source: cf. Krejčí 2006: 270

Table 4: Results of elections to the Slovak National Council, 8–9 June, 1990 (only entities that won seats)

Party, movement, coalition	Votes won		Seats
	votes	%	
VPN-MNI	991 285	29.35	**48**
KDH	648 782	19.21	**31**
SNS	470 984	13.94	**22**
KSČ	450 855	13.35	**22**
MKDH-EGY	292 636	8.66	**14**
DS	148 567	4.40	**7**
SZ	117 871	3.49	**6**

Source: Štatistický úrad SR (Slovak Statistical Office) (http://www.statistics.sk)

[8] Uznesenie P SNR 16. 3. 1990 (Resolution of the Presidium of the Slovak National Council of 13th March, 1990).

The VPN dominated, particularly in large cities. It achieved the best result in Košice (43.71%) and in Bratislava region number 1 (42.23%), and its weakest results were in areas with a strong Hungarian minority, where citizens voted along ethnic lines. The VPN fared worst in the Komárno region (13%).[9]

The KDH gained a significantly higher than average share of votes in the Dolný Kubín (44.19%) and in Stará Ľubovňa (39.53%) districts, faring worst in the Dunajská Streda (1.35%) and Komárno (1.89%) districts, which are home to a considerable Hungarian minority.[10]

SNS strongholds in the 1990 elections were the Považská Bystrica (31.18%) and Žilina (30.20%) districts. Like other Slovak parties it fared badly particularly in Dunajská Streda (1.11%) and Komárno (1.52%).[11]

The communists had the best results in the districts of Rožňava (24.69%) and Svidník (22.86%). Apart from Dunajská Streda (7.26%) their worst result was in the Dolný Kubín district (7.15%).[12]

The coalition of two Hungarian parties naturally crushed its rivals in Dunajská Streda (68.40%) and Komárno (64.69%) It had weak results in several places, particularly the Čadca district (0.03%).[13]

The DS had above-average success in the Martin district (10.22%) and did worse in, again, Dunajská Streda (0.6%). The Greens succeeded mainly in Košice (5.96%) and Senica (5.09%), faring badly in Dunajská Streda (1.53%) and Komárno (1.86%).[14]

The subsequent post-election coalition bargaining was foreshadowed by several factors which significantly influenced its course and the role of different entities in the party system. Perhaps the most important factor was the almost automatic exclusion of the KSČ, or KSS, from any consideration of participation in government. Given the atmosphere in society and the socio-political context of the 1990 elections it was practically unrealistic to form a government with the participation of the Communist Party. The main conflict of these elections was a conflict over the form of the regime, which was generally perceived as a conflict between the Communist Party on the one hand and newcomers of the type of the VPN or KDH, on the other (Rybář 2003: 278).

Coalition negotiations eventually resulted in the creation of an unnecessary majority coalition, which included the DS, as well as the VPN-MNI and KDH, which

9 Štatistický úrad SR (Slovak Statistical Office) (http://www.statistics.sk).
10 Štatistický úrad SR (Slovak Statistical Office) (http://www.statistics.sk).
11 Štatistický úrad SR (Slovak Statistical Office) (http://www.statistics.sk).
12 Štatistický úrad SR (Slovak Statistical Office) (http://www.statistics.sk).
13 Štatistický úrad SR (Slovak Statistical Office) (http://www.statistics.sk).
14 Štatistický úrad SR (Slovak Statistical Office) (http://www.statistics.sk).

in themselves held an absolute majority of seats in Parliament. In the 150 seat Slovak parliament the coalition held 86 seats. The reason for this unnecessary enlargement of the coalition with the addition of DS could however have been a purely symbolic response to the significance of this party in post-war Slovak history. The fate of DS after February 1948 was, more than any other even in Slovakia, associated with the communist rise to power, and perhaps this is one of the reasons why the revived DS was invited to the first coalition government established after the free elections in June 1990. At the head of the government stood the leader of the VPN in the election, Vladimír Mečiar. There was a series of reasons why the VPN chose Mečiar for the post of prime minister. The reason relevant to the topic of coalition government relates to the utilisation of the charismatic and penetrating Mečiar to "*highlight the VPN in competition with its government partner, the KDH*" (Kopeček 2007: 130). The VPN did not after all have as dominant a position in Slovakia as, for example, the OF did in the Czech part of the federation, which was confirmed by the results of the elections. The KDH was a very serious competitor to the VPN. The leader of the KDH, Ján Čarnogurský, became the first deputy prime minister of the Slovak government. The coalition also divided all posts at the highest levels of the Slovak National Council: the chairman (VPN) and five vice-chairmen (2 x KDH, VPN, DS, and MNI). Only four places in the wider presidium (of 21) and the chairmanship of one of a total of 11 parliamentary committees remained for the opposition.[15]

The debate over the programme statement took two days, and apart from the chairman and members of the government 47 MPs made presentations. On 4th July 1990, 93 legislators voted in favour of the programme announcement, even though the coalition government itself only had 86 seats. Because detailed documentation about how individual MPs voted is not yet available for this period, it is only possible to guess about which of the opposition MPs supported the government. Most frequently mentioned in this context is support from the SZ (the Green Party) and from Hungarian MPs. On the other hand the possibility that the government was

[15] The entire discussion about the filling of positions in the newly elected Slovak National Council at the first meeting on 16th July 1990 ware relatively stormy. The opposition, formed by the communists and nationalists as well as two Hungarian entities and the Greens claimed that it was cut off from positions in the SNR. The subsequent conversation was about the clash of two conceptions of filling positions: proportionately, which the opposition supported, and coalitional, which was supported by the newly formed coalition government majority. In the final vote the coalition's principals won out. The overall structure of the presidium of the Slovak National Council was: Coalition (17) – VPN-MNI – 9, KDH – 6, DS – 2; Opposition (4): SZ – 1, SNS – 1, Hungarian parties – 1, KSČ-KSS – 1. See: minutes and resolution from the meeting available in The Joint Cczech and Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library (In: http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990snr/stenprot/001schuz/s001001.htm).

supported by legislators from the KSČ or SNS can be practically excluded. Eight legislators voted against and 31 abstained.[16]

Shortly after being established, the government formed after the June elections in 1990 had to face its first serious crisis, which threatened the cohesion of the coalition government. This was the dispute between Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar and KDH Minister of the Interior Anton Andráš, where the conflict was more on the level of power and politics rather than material, relating to Mečiar's function as interior minister in the government before the elections in 1990. *"Mečiar did not want to release his ministry of the interior, and the information to which it had given him access before the election, out of his control, and he did not miss a single opportunity to criticise Minister Andráš"* (Kopeček 2007: 131). A large question mark still hangs over the role of Vladimír Mečiar as minister of the interior in the first half of 1990. On the one hand he was considered to be a capable and penetrating politician; on the other hand he remains accused of misusing information to which he had access as minister, including, for example, the files of the former StB, to pressure his political antagonists. He faced the specific accusation that in January 1990, on his orders, materials of the former StB, which contained files about certain future, post-November politicians, were stolen from the StB building in Trenčín. Mečiar's defence was that he "*supposedly one day found these documents on the table in his office*" (Žitný 1994: 34; for more see Lesná 2001). This is why the ministry of the interior was so close to his heart, and why by controlling its activities he wanted to also protect himself. The prime minister accused Minister Andráš of incompetence and called for his resignation. Mečiar brought the conflict onto coalition ground, and under the threat of *"either Andráš resigns or I do"* (Kopeček 2007: 131) compelled Andráš to resign.

Another crisis affecting the coalition as a whole came in connection with a development within the strongest government party, the VPN. After assuming governmental responsibilities, it became more and more clear that the VPN programme and the spectrum of opinions of its representatives (including ministers and MPs) was so broad and encompassing of various approaches to transformation, the future of the federation and to socio-economic issues that the movement could only barely ostensibly remain a unified entity. The programme and ideological breadth made an unambiguous identification of the VPN and its classification among classic party groups impossible (Kopeček 2007: 140). The "*organisational and ideological ambivalence and amorphousness*" of the VPN thus began to fully show (Leška 2006: 24). On one side stood a group of more right-wing oriented politicians, promoting "shock therapy", more radical forms of economic reform similar to those

[16] See stenographic minutes of the meeting of the Slovak National Council of 4th July 1990 (In: http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990snr/stenprot/002schuz/s002019.htm).

being initiated and implemented on the federal level by finance minister Václav Klaus – price liberalisation, voucher privatisation, restrictive economic politics and opening up to foreign capital. This group found support from another two coalition partners, as both the KDH and DS identified themselves as right-wing parties and mostly supported Klaus' reforms, even if their leaders did not agree with the rapid pace with which they were implemented. In contrast, the left-wing movement within the VPN was trying to promote a so-called gradualist approach - opposed to rapid change, highlighting the need for the social acceptability of reforms and their gradual application (Liďák – Koganová – Leška 1999: 31). From an overall view of the coalition it can be said that in the government this left-wing movement of the VPN was in the minority.

The dispute within the VPN, however, also had another dimension. Apart from the above-mentioned plurality of opinion within the movement, the political and power ambitions of certain VPN leaders and the rivalry between Chairman Fedor Gál and the Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar played a very significant role in the dissolution of the coalition. Peter Učeň identifies two groups within this conflict: bearers of a vision and power pragmatists (Učeň 1999: 86). He associates the first with the function of the official party leadership, with Fedor Gál at its helm, and identifies them as liberal democrats; the power pragmatics are described as the people around Vladimír Mečiar, who found government appointments after the elections. The power-seeking pragmatics *"more and more inclined towards an aggressive and non-consensus political style, the use of illegal means of pressure (extortion, manipulation of StB files and disinformation for the purposes of influencing public opinion)"* (Učeň 1999: 87).

The contrasts between the two groups also predominated in the question of position on future constitutional organisation. This topic generally found its way into the forefront of the political agenda and the second coalition party, the KDH, also played a part in this (Kopeček 2007: 307). The views of parts of the VPN on issues of constitutional organisation and the position of Slovakia however introduced national populism into the debate, and the power pragmatics utilised this in their appearances by inciting the desire for a higher level of autonomy for Slovakia within the Czechoslovak federation. While the group around Gál was more aligned with Czechoslovakia, Mečiar and his supporters increasingly and to varying degrees openly oriented themselves towards a sovereign Slovakia (Cabada 2000: 85).

The atmosphere within the VPN (and thanks to the position of the VPN as the strongest government party also within the coalition) was hence very tense. Events in the VPN and dealing with intra-party problems to a certain extent paralysed the coalition government. This was because Mečiar continued in his efforts to strengthen his influence in the VPN and there were increasingly frequent attacks on Fedor

Gál, for which Mečiar often even used Gál's Jewish background, and so the attacks were often of an anti-Semitic character. The rivalry between Gál's and Mečiar's factions of the VPN subsequently outgrew the VPN in a series of reciprocal public attacks, accusations and the like. The revelation of the above-mentioned suspicions that Mečiar had as Slovak minister of the interior in the government of national understanding of Milan Čič from 1989 to 1990 illegally gained and accumulated materials from the former communist secret police and misused them to intimidate and extort certain members of the government and his opponents also played a role (Lesná 2001: 35).[17] An accusation also surfaced against Mečiar that he had secretly dealt with Soviet generals in the sale of arms (Stein 2000: 83). The divisions peaked in March 1991 with the accusation on the part of Mečiar's supporters that the leadership of the VPN was censoring his speeches. Mečiar and his supporters founded the Platform for a Democratic Slovakia (ZDS) within the VPN, with which he later left the VPN and founded the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS – *Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko*).

This division within the strongest governing party understandably weakened the coalition as a whole. In April 1991, the presidium of the Slovak National Council removed Vladimír Mečiar from the office of Prime Minister of Slovakia on the suggestion of the chairman of the Slovak Council of the VPN, Fedor Gál (which it had the right to do under then Constitution and applicable legal provisions; see Constitutional law No.143/1968: article 122, paragraph 1, section a), and a similar fate struck several other ministers close to Vladimír Mečiar. Several others tendered their resignation. The remainder of the VPN, after the departure of the ZDS platform and creation of the HZDS, transformed itself into an entity with the title of ODÚ-VPN (Civic Democratic Union – Public against Violence, *Občianská demokratická únia – Verejnosť proti násiliu*) and began to closely work with the ODS, which at this time emerged in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia as a result of the disintegration of the OF. The disintegration of the VPN also meant that the MNI, formerly part of the VPN, was again independent.

Another result of the breakup of the VPN was a change in the position of strongest party in the Slovak party system, which the KDH, with 31 MPs in the Slovak National Council, became; the VPN shrunk to less than half its original size with a mere 23 of the original 48 MPs (Kopeček 2007: 136). It was for this reason that the chairman of KDH and deputy prime minister, Ján Čarnogurský, was named the new Slovak Prime Minister on 23rd April 1991, on the basis of an agreement between coalition parties. The party structure of the government thus remained unchanged; the substitutions affected only those government positions vacated by the removals from office and resignations of VPN members representing the ZDS

[17] One of the best known causes is "Tisova vila". For more see: Lesná 2001: 35.

platform. Due to the disintegration of the VPN and the departure of the ZDS into opposition, the coalition government could no longer rely on its majority within the plenary, however it had a majority in a key body – the chair of the Slovak National Assembly. No voting within the plenary on an expression of confidence took place; considering the distribution of power it was clear that this government would fail without the support of, for example, the Hungarian parties. The entire changeover basically took place only as a "reconstruction" of the existing government (Kopeček 2007: 308) and the chair of the Slovak National Council, František Mikloško (then still under the VPN, a year later he was a member KDH) simply informed MPs that the presidium of the parliament had replaced the prime minister and certain members of the government.[18]

The first speech by the newly appointed prime minister, Jan Čarnogurský, on the floor of parliament was, however, interesting. During his speech he gave his opinion on the circumstances which had led to the government crisis and the subsequent replacement of the prime minister and several other ministers. "*The cause of governmental crisis was a division in the Public against Violence movement, which won the parliamentary elections*" was how the new prime minister characterised the main problem.[19] At first glance he saw nothing strange about it. He drew attention to the fact that divisions within formerly cohesive anti-communist opposition movements were also taking place in other Central and South-Eastern European countries. He specifically named the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. "*The common enemy – totalitarian power – is gone, and thus the bond of cohesiveness of formerly unified anti-totalitarian movements disappeared*", Čarnogurský continued.[20] In contrast to the above-mentioned countries, however, the new prime minister saw in the case of the division of the VPN a certain difference. "*Nowhere has a victorious movement broken up with such internal contrariety and with such a bang as in Slovakia. Nowhere have criminal allegations been made against former members of the same movement. The roots of the crisis oscillate between individual uncertainty and the accusation of others,*" said Čarnogurský, adding that after this experience he was beginning to understand "*why Slovakia during the course if its history was not able to establish its own independent state*".[21]

The open battle between competing platforms within the VPN and disagreements between members of the government formerly delegated by a unified VPN

[18] SNR 1991, Stenographic minutes of the 13th meeting of the Slovak National Council on 24th April1991. In: http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990snr/stenprot/013schuz/s013001.htm.
[19] SNR 1991, Stenographic minutes of the 13th meeting of the Slovak National Council on 24th April1991. In: http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990snr/stenprot/013schuz/s013001.htm.
[20] SNR 1991, Stenographic minutes of the 13th meeting of the Slovak National Council on 24th April1991. In: http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990snr/stenprot/013schuz/s013001.htm.
[21] SNR 1991, Stenographic minutes of the 13th meeting of the Slovak National Council on 24th April1991. In: http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990snr/stenprot/013schuz/s013001.htm.

movement were according to Čarnogurský erupting with increasing frequency. *"It was clear that a government so composed was not able to work with adequate effectiveness,"* said the new prime minister, adding that all members of the government gradually acknowledged this, "*including Prime Minister Mečiar*".[22] The presidium of the Slovak National Council, which appoints and removes the Slovak government according to law, wanted to restore the cabinet's capacity of action. After a series of negotiations with coalition and opposition parties it eventually reached the conclusion that it would intervene by reconstructing the government rather than calling an early election. No debates were held about the decision of the presidium or the first speech given by the new prime minister. There was no vote of confidence, and the reconstructed cabinet did not present any programme announcement. Although a change of prime minister is in political science generally regarded as the formation of a new coalition (Říchová 2000: 119), in practice it was almost as if there had merely been an insignificant change in personnel and continuation of the existing government.

The change of government affected the representation of individual existing parties in the cabinet. Since there was no longer an unnecessarily large or even a minimal majority coalition, but instead a de facto minority government, the tiny DS profited most from the change. It became a necessary entity for its coalition partners for the stability of the government as a whole. In the new government, which again had 23 seats, there were nine representatives of the KDH, nine representatives of the ODÚ-VPN/MNI[23] and nine members nominated by the DS. The representation of the DS in the government therefore almost doubled in comparison to the previous cabinet. Čarnogurský's government gained the tacit support of the coalition of two Hungarian parties, which at this time held 14 seats in the Slovak National Council (Kopeček 2007: 449).

The problems inside the coalition did not however end with the divisions within the VPN. At the start of 1992 a nationalistically oriented platform emphasising the positive significance of Slovak statehood from 1939 to 1945 emerged within the KDH (Liďák – Koganová – Leška 1999: 56), also appealing for a "more radical solution" to the future organisation of Czechoslovakia than had been envisioned by KDH chairman Ján Čarnogurský, and which was oriented towards a confederative organisation (Kopeček 2000). This platform on 28th March 1992, at the convention in Zvolen, transformed into an independent party with the title of SKDH (Slovak Christian-democratic Movement, *Slovenské kresťanskodemokratické hnutie*).

[22] SNR 1991, Stenographic minutes of the 13*th* meeting of the Slovak National Council on 24th April1991. In: http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990snr/stenprot/013schuz/s013001.htm.

[23] In 1991 the remaining part of the VPN transformed into the ODÚ-VPN, on 28th March 1992 it then decided to omit the 'VPN' and continued as the ODÚ party. Martin Porubjak became the chairman of the party.

Its ranks were filled by four of the nine Christian-democratic ministers and 11 of a total of 31 MPs of the Slovak National Council originally elected on the KDH ticket, including the vice-chairman of parliament and unsuccessful candidate for the leadership of the KDH in 1991 Ján Klepáč[24] and roughly a third of the member base (Kopeček 2002: 365; Kopeček 2007: 309). Because an election was less than three months away, changes to the composition of the government as a result of the breakup of KDH were not made. SKDH thus became a coalition party, without this relationship being formalised in coalition documents in any way. The KDH however considered the actions of its deserters as both coalitional and oppositional. A publication released on the occasion of the ten year anniversary of the KDH states that on 1st April 1992 Minister Viliam Oberhauser (SKDH) suggested in Slovak parliament to accept the Declaration of the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic, *"which was in contradiction of coalitional agreements*" (Bobula 2001: 45). A KDH MP and one of the future members of the SKDH, Anton Hykisch, also presented a similar idea in November 1991 (Kopeček 2007: 308–309).

The KDH was weakened by the departure of the SKDH, however Lubomír Kopeček saw a certain positive aspect, as the *"cohesiveness of the movement was strengthened*" (Kopeček 2000). A partial rectification of the standing of KDH within the government took place a month before the elections, when Minister of Control Marián Hvozdík, who was formerly nominated to the government under the VPN, joined the movement. Another key figure of the former VPN, who joined the KDH in the period before the 1992 elections, was chairman of the Slovak National Council František Mikloško (10th March 1992), who until that time had represented the minority Christian stream within the VPN and later the ODÚ-VPN.

There were also changes of varying levels of intensity among opposition parties in the period of 1991–1992. One particular change is worthy of note, because it was to play a significant role in the future, including from the point of view of the coalitional potential of this entity. The transformation of the KSS into the modern left-wing Democratic Left Party (SDĽ – *Strana demokratickej ľavic*e) was undoubtedly one of the key events of the development of the party system during this period. After the fall of communism, the Czech Communist Party (KSČ) faced, among other things, pressure to allow the Slovak part of the party a more autonomous

[24] Vice-chairman of the Slovak National Council Ján Klepáč was one of the initiators of the formation of the SKDH platform, and later new party, and became its first leader.The departure of Ján Klepáč's group did not paralyse the party organs of the KDH, which was still quorate. Of the 113 memebers of the KDH council, 79 remained, of the 11 members of the presidium of the KDH only three left. In the parliamentary election in 1992 the SKDH was not successful (3.1%) and on 10th October 1992 it merged with the Freedom Party (*Strana Slobody*) and changed its name to the Christian-social Union (KSÚ – *Kresťanská sociálna únia*). It supported the politics of the HZDS, and after a defeat in the 1994 election (2.1%) the KSÚ merged with the SNS. Under the SNS some returned to politics in the future. For more see: Bobula 2001: 41–45; Kopeček 2000.

position. For this reason in November 1990 it acceded to a change in acronym to KSČS, the addition of the "S" intending to better reflect the Slovak element in the party, and it further accepted a new organisational structure, under whose umbrella the new Czech (KSČM) and Slovak (KSS) entities would be established.

A dispute between KSČM and KSS over the subsequent direction to take continued, however. The KSS, under the leadership of "reformists" surrounding Peter Weiss and Milan Ftáčník started a process of transformation at the end of 1990, which involved the renaming to KSS-SDĽ (the addition of the *Strana demokratickej ľavice* – Left Democratic Party suffix), a programmatic and ideological redefinition, orientation towards Western European socialist and social-democrat structures, joining the Socialist International and a total break in continuity with the pre-November Communist Party. This movement did not gain great support within the KSČM, and both sides thus began to move away from each other, thereby initiating the gradual disintegration of the umbrella structure of the KSČS. An indication of this was the establishment of two independent parliamentary groups in the then Federal Assembly, from which state of affairs there was merely a small step to the complete independence of the KSS-SDĽ. In the meantime the party changed its name again, removing the "KSS" part and retaining only the SDĽ (February 1991). During 1991 there was a gradual distancing from Czech communists, which culminated at a party conference in December 1991, which confirmed the previous reformational development under the leadership of Peter Weiss (Kopeček 2007: 184 and 187; Kopeček 2002: 361). All these steps were in the direction of the post-communists rising out of political isolation which they found themselves in after the elections in 1990. The impact of the transformation of KSS to the SDĽ in terms of coalitional potential only expressed itself after the subsequent elections. With this step the party rid itself of the label of an entity opposed to the system (Kopeček 2002: 362).

The federal KSČS officially ceased to exist on 23rd April 1992 (Fiala – Mareš – Pšeja 2005: 1414–1415), though the SDĽ had not actually been a part of it since December 1991. The more "conservative" part of the KSS, which did not agree with the transformation and supported the maintenance of the original values, split away from SDĽ in 1991 and founded an entity with the name of KSS 91. In August 1992 KSS 91 joined with the Communist Union (*Zväz komunistov*) to form today's KSS. Until 2002, however, the KSS was disassociated with political events in Slovakia. In 2002 it became a parliamentary party; however in the next elections in 2006 it was again not elected to Parliament. Today's KSS, according to Grigorij Mesežnikov, "*propagates theses that attest to its anti-system character*" (Mesežnikov 2006).

The parliamentary (opposition) SZ (Green Party, *Strana zelených*) split on 15th February 1992 into the pro-federalist Green Party and the nationalistically oriented Green Party of Slovakia (SZS – *Stranu zelených na Slovensku*), which in

socio-economic issues had shifted to the left of the original SZ (Liďák – Koganová – Leška 1999: 60). The first internal conflicts within the Slovak National Party were also experienced during this period, in relation to the formation of a position on the constitutional organisation and future of Czechoslovakia. There were also disputes around the person of the then chairman Víťazoslav Moric (Kopeček 2007: 417–420).

Cleavages

The main cleavages of Slovak political parties do not correspond to prevailing cleavage theories. The classical theory outlined by Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan defined four cleavages that influence the likeness of the party system: centre – periphery, urban – rural, church – state, and owner – worker (Lipset – Rokkan 1967; for more see also Tusičišny 2003). Though almost all of the above classical cleavages have appeared in Slovak political development to a greater or lesser extent (Rybář 2003: 278–279), specific conflicts, for which Slovak and foreign political scientists have been finding various designations, have had much more influence on the party system in Slovakia: liberal democracy and non-liberal conception of the regime (Hloušek – Kopeček 2005: 17), possibly between nationalistic-populist entities on the one hand and liberal-democratic on the other (Szomolányi 1999: 14), authoritarian-power bloc and the consensual-democratic bloc (Szomolányi 1999: 62), or the more general and simplified division of parties into standard and non-standard (Lang 1995: 33; Mesežnikov 2002).

The specificity of this conflict has developed from the fact that there is no eternal programme or ideological issue, dispute or conflict at its centre, but rather the personality of one person, chairman of the HZDS Vladimír Mečiar, towards whom other players in political events (be they individual politicians or parties as such) defined themselves either positively or negatively. "*This is why in the revitalised dispute over the form of the regime in Slovak political science terminology the formerly journalistic labelling as the conflict of mečiarism vs. antimečiarism quickly became common*" (Hloušek – Kopeček 2005: 17). Party politics in Slovakia was hence significantly personalised under the influence of this dispute, caused by the long term function of the charismatic Vladimír Mečiar in Slovak politics (Marušiak 2006). According to Lubomír Kopeček, Mečiar became an "*important dividing line that determined the positions of other political entities"* (Kopeček 2007: 143), influenced the form of the Slovak party system and "*all Slovak political formations in the 1990s faced the question of whether they were prepared to work with this entity* (the HZDS)" (Kopeček 2007: 143).

At the start of 1998, still during the controversial government of Vladimír Mečiar, Grigorij Mesežnikov characterised this cleavage thus: "*The differences between government and opposition parties are particularly visible on the level of their*

distinct understanding of democracy (authoritarianism vs. liberalism, conflict politics vs. consensus politics and preference of the values of the individual vs. elevating the interests of a collective entity)" (Mesežnikov 1998: 93).

This dispute however begins to appear in Slovak politics much earlier than 1998. It significantly influenced the development of individual political parties and the party system itself, essentially from its formation at the start of the 1990s. In the first phase in the period from 1989 to 1990, when the party system was taking place, this conflict was not particularly noticeable. In this period political parties were only just emerging. Political scientists have identified three types of political parties that existed within the party system during this period. The first are those that are completely new, without tradition (the KDH, VPN and later their successor parties, the HZDS and ODÚ). The second type is parties that after 1989 renewed their activities, which had been interrupted during the communist regime (SDSS /Slovak Social-democratic Party, *Sociálnodemokratická strana Slovenska/*, and SNS). The final type is those parties that existed in a certain form under the previous regime (KSS, DS[25]) and which continued in their activities (Liďák – Koganová – Leška, 1999: 30–31). The dominant entity during this period in Slovakia was the VPN, a broad-spectrum entity composed of various ideological programme streams, whose single connecting idea was opposition to KSČ (and later KSS) and to the previous regime (Krivý – Feglová – Balko 1996: 42).

The second phase of the development of the party system is its crystallisation. This period is bound by the elections in 1990 and 1992. This was a period in which the VPN was divided into two successive entities, part of the KDH was subdivided and the KSS was transformed into the SDĽ. It was precisely the division of the VPN that was the main sign of the commencement of a new specific cleavage of mečiarism – antimečiarism. It began with the disintegration of the VPN in spring 1991 and the subsequent establishment of the HZDS under the leadership of Vladimír Mečiar and – as Hloušek and Kopeček assert – ended at the beginning of 1994. "*During this period Mečiar's newly created the HZDS managed to develop an extensive electoral base and seize power after the 1992 elections"* (Hloušek – Kopeček 2005: 17). For the party system itself the period from 1992 to 1994 is characteristic of the so-called first dominance of the HZDS. Both then governing parties, the HZDS and SNS, however underwent tumultuous intra-party development during this period, which resulted in the gradual departure of segments dissatisfied with Mečiar's style of governing. With their departure to join the opposition the governing coalition lost its majority and in March 1994 also lost a vote of no confidence in parliament. Hloušek

[25] The DS existed before 1989 under the title of the Slovak Resurgence Party (SSO – *Strana slovenskej obrody*). It originated in 1948 with the transformation of the existing DS to a a satellite party of the KSS.

and Kopeček consider the emergence of a broad coalition lead by Mečiar's former foreign affairs minister, Jozef Moravčík, to be a significant shift in the development of the cleavage of mečiarism and antimečiarism. This is because Moravčík's coalition was a highly heterogeneous grouping including on the one hand the strongly anti-communist, conservative and right-wing KDH and on the other the post-communist and left-wing SDĽ. *"The bond of the coalition at the given time was a joint rejection of the methods of Vladimír Mečiar"* (Hloušek – Kopeček 2005: 17–18).

This cleavage then appeared in full force from 1994 to 1998, which is called the period of the second dominance of the HZDS. After the early election in autumn 1994 it became clear that the HZDS had zero potential to form a coalition with the parties of Moravčík's government, which Mečiar solved by the "*creation of an exceptionally ideologically heterogeneous government*" (Hloušek – Kopeček 2005: 18). Apart from his HZDS this government also contained the extremely nationalistic SNS and the radical left-wing Slovak Workers' Association (ZRS, *Združenie robotníkov Slovenska*). *"This ideological heterogeneity confirmed the commenced trend of the functioning of party competition, which was founded on the revitalised dispute over the form of the regime. Both the SNS and the ZRS were prepared to accept and participate in a number of controversial steps which characterised Mečiar's government"* (Hloušek – Kopeček 2005: 18). The style of politics of the HZDS, ZRS and SNS government and its steps to eliminate opponents led a large part of the opposition to a temporary consolidation of their power for the purpose of defeating the then governing coalition. During this period we can observe the seed of future political parties - functioning in the short or long term. The entire period is again marked by a polarisation of the political and party system into two opposed blocs of "non-standard" and "standard" parties (Lang 1995: 33). The opposition was, by the essence of the dispute alone, characterised by a strong antimečiarism. Co-operation on the basis of being parties in opposition hence in many regards again transcended the classic (traditional) cleavage of political parties. The bond uniting opposition activities, including integrational tendencies, was the relationship to Vladimír Mečiar. On this principle, for example, the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) was established in 1997. The composition of the government after the elections in 1998 confirmed the presence of this specific cleavage. The government was put together across the left-right spectrum by parties considered to be antimečiarist. "*Their main bond became a fear of the return of the HZDS to power and the main uniting goal was the removal of the non-liberal results of the previous era, the consolidation of the democratic regime and the entry of Slovakia to the EU and NATO*" (Hloušek – Kopeček 2005: 18–19). This is what held the coalition parties together and was among the significantly stabilising elements.

In the period from 1994 to 1998 the role of the nationalistic-ethnic cleavage, which had been partially present from the start of the 1990s, also played a key

role. The politics of the government composed of the HZDS, ZRS and SNS was directed at the Hungarian minority and at in least several cases led to the violation of international commitments relating to the protection of minorities. After 1998, partially thanks to the engagement of parties representing the Hungarian minority in the coalition government alongside Slovak parties, this cleavage ceased to play a significant role. It reappears again after 2006, however, when the SNS again becomes a part of the coalition government.

Instead of the conflict between left and right, during the decade after the first free elections a conflict between democracy and authoritarianism prevailed in Slovak politics. This influenced, for example, the main competitive relationships on the Slovak political scene. Unlike other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, for example, the centre-right parties in Slovakia "*were defined not by their position towards the post-communist left but towards authoritarian and nationalistic tendencies"* (Mesežnikov 2005). According to Hloušek and Kopeček, however, after 2000 this cleavage begins to lose significance and vigour. This was caused predominantly by new parties which during this period penetrated the party system and which begin to present themselves otherwise than by their positive or negative relationship to Vladimír Mečiar. This particularly applies to the SMER party, which "*refused the existing division according to the mečiarism – antimečiarism cleavage and founded its success on criticism of the steps of Dzurinda's coalition government, primarily in the socio-economic sphere*" (Hloušek – Kopeček 2005: 19), and also to the New Citizen's Alliance (ANO, *Aliancia nového občana*) of media magnate Pavol Rusko. As Hloušek and Kopeček mention, the HZDS also played its own part in this by changing its political strategy, replacing "*an effort to remove Dzurinda's coalition government at any price"* with a focus on "*demonstrating its political transformation and (partially) distancing itself from the past*" (Hloušek – Kopeček, 2005: 19).

The party system thus developed into a more standard situation, which was confirmed by the elections in 2002 and by subsequent development. This is because the results of the 2002 elections allowed, for the first time in Slovak post-revolutionary history, the creation of a government identifiable on the left – right scale, catering for the approaches of parties to economic and social issues. Although the government was in the end composed of parties with relatively similar programmes, this did not guarantee stability. Internal fragmentation within individual parties, orientations on specific themes, personal disagreements and the ambitions of individual leaders of coalition parties, as well as individual groups within the parties themselves, all led to a very unstable government. The government was gradually abandoned by factions of two of the four coalition parties, after which two entire parties and the prime minister were in the end forced by circumstance to call early elections.

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